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LENT

The lenten period is a period of 40 days which precedes Holy Week. It is consecrated to the preparation of the celebration of our Lord's Passion and Resurrection (just as the lenten period commonly known as Advent prepares us for the coming of Christ at the moment of His Nativity).

The flood lasted 40 days; Moses remained 40 days upon Mt. Sinai before giving the Law of God to the people; Israel spent 40 days in the desert before entering the promised land; Elijah walked 40 days and 40 nights before encountering the Lord at Mt. Horeb; the Lord Jesus fasted for 40 days in the desert triumphing over temptation before beginning to announce the good news of the Kingdom of God to all people. During the 40 days of Lent – the days of repentance, of fasting, and of prayer – the Christian undertakes a pilgrimage towards the Lord. He prepares to meet His Lord in the radiant night of the Resurrection, during the liturgy of Holy Pascha.

Similarly, each Wednesday and each Friday, in remembrance of Christ's Passion, faithful Christians prepare for the coming Sunday, which is the day of the Resurrection – a day on which we remain in total fasting before the Liturgy, in order to be filled and nourished with the Bread of Heaven during the Holy Eucharist, that is, communion in the Holy Mysteries.

* * * * * *

Women, blot your lipstick before receiving Holy Communion; better still, don't put any on until after receiving, then you won't get any on the ikons or cross.

Under Your Compassion

Under your compassion we take refuge, Theotokos:
do not overlook our prayers in the midst of tribulation,
but deliver us from danger,
only pure, only blessed one.

Pod Tvoju Milost

Pod Tvoju milost, pribihajem Bohoh rodice Divo.
Molitvna sich neprezri vo skorbich
no ot bid izbavi nas.
Jedina cistaja, i blahoslovennaja.

BELOVED PRAYER

During Great Lent, various special services are held in parish churches. The Presanctified Liturgy has become more popular in the last few years, but some parishes have continued having the special services which have been favorites throughout the years. Among these are the Acafist to the Virgin Mary, Christ or the Cross, Paraklis to the Virgin Mary, and St. Andrew's Canon.

On many Sundays a series of Missions is served in neighboring parishes. Again, the service varies. One of the most popular is the Paraklis to the Mother of God with its poignant prayers.

> "I beseech you, O Virgin, dispel the troubles of my soul, quiet the surge of my despair...
>
> "With the brightness of your light, dispel the darkness of my sins...
>
> "O Mother of God who gave us

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ANOTHER VIEW

A Holy Day which commemorates the message of the Angel Gabriel to Mary and the Incarnation of Christ is written about in Luke 1:24-38 and bears the title Annunciation of the Blessed Ever-Virgin Mary. It was celebrated as early as the fifth century. The tenth Synod of Toledo, which was held in 658, mentions it as a day already well known and universally kept.

Almost the whole of the Virgin Mary's reputation is based on the Gospel of St. Luke. She is portrayed as an ideal believer and a model for us all. When she received the news that she was to give birth to the Messiah and that she was to remain a virgin while doing so, she responded to the angel Gabriel by saying: "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord; be it according to thy word" (Luke 1:38) John's Gospel never mentions her name; while Mark does not have a birth narrative at all, and her importance in that Gospel is certainly downplayed. (Mark 3:31-35) Although Matthew, like Luke, has a birth narrative, the focus of attention is on Joseph and his righteousness, not on Mary. She is mentioned again in the Book of Acts which discloses that she remained in the Christian community.

In a sense the Virgin Mary was the first Christian theologian. Theology has rather conveniently been labeled as "faith seeking understanding." Mary was not merely a passive instrument. She wanted to understand. She pondered. In Luke 2:19, she is described as "pondered them in her heart." In the first century, the heart, rather than the brain, was the organ considered to be the place for thinking. She was not merely a passive recipient of Gabriel's word to her.

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CHRONOLOGY

MARCH 2007

IT HAS BEEN MORE THAN 1,000 years since a decree was issued which forbad women from setting foot on Mount Athos. This self-governing community of some 20 monasteries, located on a remote headland in northeastern Greece, is also known as the Holy Mountain. The European Parliament in both 2002 and 2003 has tried to lift the ban. Now some women active in politics agree with the lifting of the ban stating that the EU has given millions of euros toward the restoration of monastery buildings, female taxpayers contribute to this, that the ban is an anchronism which denies access to the beautiful United Nations listed heritage site and that female ornithologists are denied the right to conduct research here.

INSTEAD OF TEARS what appear to be blood stains have appeared on an ikon of the Mother of God of Kazan in the SS Peter and Paul Church in Log, a small village near Volgograd, Russia. Many miracles have been noted occurring to those who have prayed before the ikon. The Diocese of Volgograd has set up a special commission to study this phenomenon. It includes doctors from the regional cardiology center.

THE ARK, a 24-hour Internet radio outreach started on January 21 at www.receive.org. Programming will focus on contemporary Orthodox Christian music as well as on the Orthodox Christian Network's syndicated radio program "Come Receive the Light."

MOST UKRAINIANS CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS ON THE JULIAN CALENDAR, according to a poll taken in Ukraine and the Crimea of 2001 respondents in both rural and urban centers. It showed that 92% planned to celebrate New Year's on 1 January, while 67% planned to on January 14. As to Christmas, 89% celebrate on January 7.

ANTHIOCHIAN HOUSE OF STUDY offers two courses in Orthodox studies for men or women in the form of a directed reading program for those unable to attend a regular theological seminary. For info and catalogue: St. Stephen's Course of Studies, 385 Ivy Lane, Bergenfield, NJ 07621.

THE TOMB OF ST. PAUL has been found several feet below the main altar of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls in Rome. Only one end has so far been excavated and attempts will be made to open the tomb and find whether relics are still in the tomb.

A CAPUCHIN MONASTERY IN THE NETHERLANDS has been purchased by the Russian Orthodox Church and is being developed as the largest Orthodox complex outside of Russia. The complex includes an Romanesque church, separate chapel, residence cells, kitchen and refectory which are being converted into schoolrooms, a book store and library for Eastern Europeans belonging to St. Nicholas Parish in Amsterdam.

THE VATICAN REPORTED that is has full diplomatic relations with 175 states as well as relations of a special character with Malta, mission of the Russian Federation, and the office of the Organization for the Liberation of Palestine among others. It established diplomatic relations in December with Montenegro.

THE CENTER FOR FAMILY CARE has a website whose purpose it is to act as a clearinghouse of information on raising the family in the Orthodox Church. The website can be accessed at www.familyaschurch.org. For more info on the site or the center, call 845/424-8175 or email at familycare@goarch.org.

DAYLIGHT, the official newsletter of the Diocesan Apostolate for Youth of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese in the USA made its debut in The Church Messenger of January 21, 2007. It will be published as an insert bimonthly in the Messenger. The first edition was funded by Metropolitan Nicholas. The editor is Fr. Matthew Moriak.

NOW AVAILABLE IN RUSSIAN with a foreword by Metropolitan Kiril, chairman of the Russian Orthodox Church's foreign department is "Introduction to Christianity" written by Pope Bendict WVI and originally published in 1968.

ST. SAVA SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY in Libertyville, IL celebrated its 20th anniversary with an announcement that it has graduated 71. Of this, over 50 men have been ordained as priests.

HOW COMMENDABLE! The St. Nicholas Parish in New York has installed a 50-line teleconferencing telephone system which allows people to dial in from home and hear entire services on weekdays as well as on Sundays. Fr. John Beskid turns the system on 15 minutes before the service is to start and people can call an 800 number and be connected to that day's service. For info starting this program, call Michael Kormanik at 718/980-4862.

RUSSIA IS THE ONLY COUNTRY without official chaplains in the armed forces. However, there are 2000 priests offering services to the army on a volunteer basis. A decided change in the atmosphere on the bases where they serve has bee noted.

A HUGE 19-FOOT HIGH ORTHODOX CROSS has been placed at the junction of Russia's border with China and Mongolia in Eastern Siberia. The metal cross weighing more than a ton carried the inscription "Save, Oh God, Thy People". It was designed to mark the revival of spirituality of the population on the Russian border. Border guards are faced with winter temperatures of 40C below zero and summer temperatures above 40 degrees C.

(Continued from front page)

BELOVED PRAYER

Christ, grant to those who anxiously seek your divine shelter that they deserve to be healed of the illness of body and soul.

"O Virgin, you shall heal the sorrows of my soul, you shall cure the illness of my body, and I shall sing your praise...

"O Virgin, despise not the flowing of my tears, for you have given birth to the Lord Who wipes away all tears."

But no matter which service is served at the end, we all humbly knelt and the whole congregation sang the poignant "Pod Tvoju Milost" or "Under Your Compassion" which is printed above.

This is one of the oldest hymns written about the Mother of God. In 1917 a papyrus was uncovered in Egypt, about the size of an index card, which had inscribed upon it ten lines of this prayer. The handwriting and papyrus were dated to be from about the year 250. Did someone write this down for themselves so that they could use it at prayer time? Who knows?

(Continued from front page)

ANOTHER VIEW

Then she believed the words Gabriel proclaimed to her and yielded to them. We must not think that this was easy for her. Surely she was tempted to be skeptical or cynical. We see in the reading that she was thoroughly capable of questioning the announcement. She might as well could have wondered how such a great and wondrous thing could happen to her a virtually unknown person. She was but a girl in a culture that did not place a high value on women. Apparently, she was poor. For we see that later when she and Joseph went to the Temple to make the offering for purification, it was the poor people's offering that they made (Luke 2:22-24). She was not a princess in a palace.

After conferring with Elizabeth, Mary burst into praise. She worshipped God in the words that are commonly known to the Christian world as the Magnificat. (Luke 1:46-55). She magnified the Lord and proclaimed God's name to be Holy. She acknowledged that the Mighty One had done great things to her and that future generations would call her blessed. (Luke 1:48-49). She was an ideal disciple because her belief and her awareness of her blessedness led to a heartfelt worship of the Lord.

What example does she give to us? A disciple does not just hear the word and raise question in order to confirm the truth of what is being said. A disciple worships the giver of all grace. Worship is integral to the life of a Christian, not optional. One may choose not to go to church on a particular Sunday morning but worship is not optional in the life of a Christian.

To worship is to acknowledge that God is God and is worthy of our praise. If we do not worship, it is because we really do not know who God is. For if we know God, then we must worship.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

We should not neglect to also mention the need for us to sign ourselves with the Cross when we begin our prayer. We should do this properly and not like those who are ashamed of the Cross of Christ and weave it before their face and chest not even placing their fingers in the appropriate place. Crossing ourselves carelessly saddens our Lord and is taken as a sin of the man of prayer. Such a Cross is not only powerless but it also gives joy to the demons, for then it is not the most terrible weapon against them. The sinner is less afraid of the place of punishment than the demons are of the Cross, for they tremble and flee in fear from the Cross, afraid to even look at its power (for the power of the Cross is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself) which burns them like fire. Armed with the Cross, the holy martyrs went to the most horrible tortures. The saints healed the sick, raised the dead, fearlessly drank poison, passed through fire and water by the power of the Cross of Christ.

One of the old Christian writers, from the first centuries of the Christian Church, testifies that the Christians of that era, following the Apostolic constitutions and traditions, at the beginning of every task or journey signed themselves with the Cross. They did this at departure, putting on robes, putting on shoes, at washing, before and after meals, making fires, before lying in bed, sitting after a journey, in one word: at the beginning of every task, journey or event. Today's Christians, however, taken over by some sort of a shame, even when they visit the home of a friend at their Slava, upon sitting for the meal won't even think to cross themselves, as if they don't know the words of the Lord: "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when he comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

From Pravoslavlje,

* * * * * *

Seest thou what fasting does: it heals illnesses, drives out demons, removes wicked thoughts, makes the heart pure. If someone has even been seized by an impure spirit, let him know that this kind, according to the word of the Lord, "goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21).

- Saint Athanasius the Great.

* * * * * *

By fasting it is possible both to be delivered from future evils and to enjoy the good things to come. We fell into disease through sin; let us receive healing through repentance, which is not fruitful without fasting.

- Saint Basil the Great.

THE POWER OF THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

I received a letter which said: "What an interesting article for "The Herald" for the Sunday of the Cross."

The sign of the cross and Orthodox prayer are capable of killing microbes and change the optical properties of water – a study

Moscow, March 17, Interfax – Scientists have proved experimentally the miracle-working properties of the sign of the cross and prayer.

'We have ascertained that the old custom to make a sign of the cross over food and drink before a meal has a profound mystical meaning. Standing behind it is the practical use: the food is purified literally in an instant. This is a great miracle, which happens literally every day,' physicist Angelina Malakhovskaya said as cited by the Zhizn newspaper on Friday.

Malakhovskaya has studied that power of the sign of the cross with the blessing of the Church for nearly 10 years now. She has carried out a great number of experiments, which have been repeatedly verified before their results were made public.

She has discovered in particular the unique bactericidal properties of water after being blessed by an Orthodox prayer and a sign of the cross. The study also revealed a new, earlier unknown property of the Word of God to transform the structure of water, increasing considerably its optical sensity in the short ultra-violet spectral region, the newspaper writes.

The scientists have verified the impact the Lord's Prayer and the Orthodox sign of the cross make on pathogenic bacteria. Water samples from various reservoirs – wells, rivers, lakes – were taken for the research. All the samples had goldish taphylococcus, a colon bacillus. It turned out however, that if the Lord's Prayer is said and a sign of the cross is made over them, the number of harmful bacteria will decrease seven, ten, hundred and even over thousand times.

The experiments were made in such a way as to exclude a possible impact of mental suggestion. The prayer was said by both believer and non-believers, but the number of pathogenic bacteria in various environments with different sets of bacteria still decreased as compared to the reference templates.

The scientists have also proved the beneficial impact that the prayer and the sign of the cross have on people. All the participants in the tests had their blood pressure stabilized and blood indexes improved. Strikingly, the indexes changed towards the healing needed: hypotensive people had their blood pressure raised, while hypertensive people had it reduced.

It was also observed that if the sign of the cross is made offhandedly, with the three fingers put together unscrupulously or placed outside the necessary points – the middle of the forehead, the center of the solar plexus and the recesses in the right and left shoulders – the positive result was much weaker or absent altogether.

OUR ICONS

Christian iconography began to blossom when the Church became free under the Emperor Constantine. Pilgrims to the holy places brought back images of the saints who relics they venerated, and representations of the sites they had visited. The feasts and images grew up together and became part of everyday life of the Christian.

Some icons are portraits of saints. Some make present events from the scripture, the life of the Church, or the lives of the saints. Some have even come from hymns. All of the icons are part of the life and memory of the Church: a remembering that makes present.

Icons are painted according to strict traditions. An iconographer must be a believer who lives a Christian life, praying, fasting, giving alms. The iconographer never makes an image according to his own artistic whims. Each element of an icon is carefully called for by tradition. This brings us to an important point. Icons are first and foremost liturgical pictures as the Bible is first and foremost a liturgical book. What does this mean?

When the Church comes together to worship it is what it was meant to be, the living Body of Christ. Worship, liturgy and life, are inextricably bound together. The icons and the Bible cannot be understood outside of the context of worship of the Church, for they would then have no life. "What the gospel is to the ear, the icon is to the eye."

SOMETHING NEW

Sometimes we might need to use a "method" to freshen up our prayer time. I recently came across this "Five-Finger Prayer" to use as a guide when praying for others:

- When you fold your hands, the thumb is nearest you. So begin by praying for those closest to you – your loved ones (Philippians 1:3-5).
- The index finger is the pointer. Pray for those who teach – Bible teachers and preachers, and those who teach children (1 Thessalonians 5:25).
- The next finger is the tallest. It reminds you to pray for those in authority over you – national and local leaders, and your supervisor at work (1 Timothy 2:1-2).
- The fourth finger is usually the weakest. Pray for those who are in trouble or who are suffering (James 5:13-16).
- Then comes your little finger. It reminds you of your smallness in relation to God's greatness. Ask Him to supply your needs (Philippians 4:6,19).

It's not the words we pray that matter, it's the condition of our heart.

* * * * * *

Love cannot exist in isolation, but presupposes the other. Self-love is the negation of love … self-love is hell; for, carried to its ultimate conclusion, self-love signifies the end of all joy and all meaning. Hell is not other people; hell is myself, cut off from others in self-centredness.

Memories

Recollections of My Baba and Dzedo

I always remember my Baba in prayer. One leg on the floor and one leg elevated on the sofa; she had an ulcerated leg for years, which she tended to with witch hazel and a bandage. I'd enter the living room and hear her whispering to God in prayer. I remember her loaning me her "Prayer book" for church on Sundays and suddenly it became worn looking and she said to me I couldn't use it anymore, since she wanted to be buried with it in her casket.

Sunday afternoon was a time for visiting your neighbor; and I used to tag along and listen to them chat for a few hours, as they gossiped and visited each other. They spoke in broken English and Slavonic and I pretty much understood them. We lived in a close-knit neighborhood of 215 families with two churches and several grocery stores. Hearing the church bells at various times of the day and blessing ourselves when heard was normal and routine. I miss hearing the church bells now.

Chickens and roosters crowed at dawn and evening. I also miss that sound. Mom and Dad raised chickens and sold eggs. Our neighbors raised pigs.

There were no garages, because there were no cars. But there were plenty of shanties (sheds) for odds and ends and tools. Baba would recycle old tattered no longer usable clothes into rags for carpets, which graced the kitchen floor to keep our feet warm. She would cut the rags in lengths, sew ends together, taught me how to roll a ball, and then the carpet weaver would create colorful carpets. When washed, they were dried on the picket fence.

Moms and Babas always wore aprons to protect their dresses from being soiled from all the baking and cooking they did. There was never any complaints about how hard they worked, they just did it, like it was expected of them. Baba was a great cook and baker. From what I understand she worked as a baker in Connecticut; Bridgeport, I believe, but not certain. Her ethnic delicacies like looksha (a potato crepe rolled in butter), perohi, pagach, gugell, kolachy, homemade noodles and soup were scrumptious. Pans and pans of homemade bread, noodles, pies and doughnuts, cakes and cookies were routine sights in our household. I can almost smell the aroma this moment.

So many memories of dear Mom, Baba and Dzedo.

Barbara A. Powell

Please send your MEMORIES to Margaret Pysarchyk, 2125 Garfield St., Lorain, OH 44055 or at mypysarchyk@hotmail.com

PRESS FUND

Thank You for your help.

Irene Rossi, Anna Dorozynski, William Weir, Sophie Zonitch, Anonymous (3), Irene Allen, Dorothy Laskovich, Scott and Sudan Boris, Steve and Irene Pacak, The Baumgartens, RBO (Russian Brotherhood of the USA), Marie Russian, Robert Rybnicky, Nicholas Terebey, Helen Dzugan, Margaret Yanchisin, Constantina Morgan, Raymond Gadke, Natalie Sedel, Julia Golit, Catherine Shaffchick, Olga Cleaver, Courtland Swift, Cyril Wadzik, Ellen Motoviloff Miller, Ethel Watlock, Mary Chupak, Fr. Joseph Hotrovich, Charles S. Wilson Memorial Hospital graduating class of 1945.

*Linda Smith in thanksgiving and for continued good health of family.

*Alexandra Bosko for good health of Matushka Nina.

*Tod Mixson in honor of Joe and Helen Zak - fellow parishioners of St. Michael Orthodox Church in Beaumont, TX.

*Olga Weiss for health of Sister Stephanie Chmel and Anna Boruch.

May Almighty God rest the souls of His Servants in the Abode of the saints and may their memories be eternal.

*Ronald Elias Meholick (December 30, 2006) and Judy Roman Mattern (December 28, 2006) by Cecelia Davis

*Mildred Milosevich (March 5, 2005) by husband Joseph

*Vladimir Fryntzko (December 1, 2006) by Fr. Alexander and Vickie Federoff

*Julia Hutchko Spack on 130th birthday January 1 by grandson John Spack

*Fr. Basil by Alexandra Bosko

*In memory of Job

*Paul Stenko and John and Mary Selepak by his wife and their daughter Marion Stenko

*Michael Spark by son John Spark

*James Wilson by Frances A. Wilson

WINTER'S GRACE

Most of us have papers and magazines piled up expecting to read them some day. So when we recently read about a man who was freed after being trapped for two days under a pile of paper in his apartment, it caught our attention. It seems that the man's collection of printed materials, which he had stacked wall to wall and floor to ceiling, collapsed and buried him alive. Emergency workers filled 50 garbage bags as they dug through the debris just to reach him.

We don't need a Mount Everest of old newspapers and magazines to know the feeling of being trapped under the crush of our work and the burden of seemingly overwhelming spiritual demands, especially during this season of the year. How are we to obtain inner rest? In Tyranny of the Urgent, Charles Hummel gives us some insight: "Jesus' prayerful waiting for God's instructions … gave Him a sense of direction, set a steady pace, and enabled Him to do every task God assigned."

Jesus, Himself, gives us direction. He invites the weary to come to Him, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:29).

This rest is received by faith. In Christ we can find release from the tyranny of the urgent and accomplish every task He has given us to do.

LIGHTER MOMENT

A parish wanted to get the cemetery cleaned for the annual blessing of graves. They wanted to get more helpers so they put a plea in the church bulletin. "Please help! We need more bodies!"

SOBORNOST

The Church and Communism

The council also confirmed the February 1, 1918 excommunication by Patriarch Tikhon of the Bolsheviks, whom he termed "enemies of Christ, open or disguised," "the godless rulers of the darkness of our time."

> By the authority conferred upon us by God we forbid you to approach the Holy Sacraments, and if you still call yourselves Christians we anathematize you…As for you, faithful sons of the Church, we call upon you to stand in defense of our holy Mother, now outraged and oppressed…and should it become necessary to suffer for the cause of Christ, we call upon you to follow us in the way of suffering…And you, my brother bishops and priests…without delay organize religious associations, call upon them to range themselves among the spiritual combatants who will resist physical force with the power of the Spirit. We firmly believe that the enemies of the Church of Christ will be broken and scattered by the power of the Cross, for the promise of Him Who bore the Cross is unalterable: "I will build My Church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18)

On November 20, 1920, Patriarch Tikhon, foreseeing his impending imprisonment and the loss of the free exercise of his authority, issued a decree authorizing Russian bishops to set up temporary independent organizations of their own, should normal relations with the Patriarchate of Moscow become impossible because of the communists. After the collapse of the White Russian armies, over one million Russians found themselves in exile, including many priests and bishops. In 1921, at the invitation of the Patriarch of Serbia, these exiled bishops applied Tikhon's 1920 decree and held a Council at Sremski-Karlovci in Yugoslavia.

This council worked out a temporary ecclesiastical administration for Russian Orthodox in exile. Supreme control was vested in a Synod of bishops, who were to meet annually at Karlovci; an administrative board was also set up, composed of clergy and laity. To this very day (union is expected on May 17, 2007), this "Synod Abroad" of the "Russian Orthodox Church in Exile" exists apart from the Moscow Patriarchate, originally maintaining that the latter was in the hands of the communist government. Its headquarters were moved from Karlovci to Munich after World War II, and to New York City in 1949.

The Russian Church suffered greatly under Stalin, and *sobornost* was only able to re-surface when the Nazi armies threatened the Soviet state and Stalin admitted to needing the aid of the Church. Councils were held to elect new patriarchs: Sergius in 1944 (*locum tenens* since Tikhon had died in 1925); Alexis in 1945; Pimen in 1971; and the present Patriarch Aleksy II in 1991.

A conference was held in Moscow in 1948, with delegates from Alexandria, Antioch, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia and Albania present. This synod decreed that Anglican clergy who become Orthodox must be re-ordained. It also condemned all participation in the World Council of Churches:

> The aims of the Ecumenical Movement…in its present state correspond neither to the ideals of Christianity nor to the task of the Church of Christ, as understood by the Orthodox Church.

This explains why at Amsterdam, Lund and Evanston the Orthodox Churches from behind the Iron Curtain were not present at WCC meetings (even though Constantinople and the "free" Churches of the East were). In 1961, however, the Moscow Patriarchate applied for membership in the WCC and was accepted, opening the way to membership for the other Orthodox Churches in communist countries.

Fr. Michael Dahulich, PhD

* * * * * *

When we put our cares in God's hands, He puts His peace in our hearts.

Undique (from everywhere)

We stand in church for the reading of the Gospel of the day, showing its prominence in our midst.

Many parishes have added ramps and elevators to their church buildings to make for easier access. Next? How about a hearing aid system for so many who cannot hear the service clearly?

The closer you are to God, the bigger your heart for people.

Interpreting the Bible from outside the Church and independent of Tradition leads to heresy and division. Tradition is the key to preserving truth, unity, orthodoxy, oneness of mind and of faith.

When the Holy Cross is brought out for veneration on the Third Sunday of Great Lent (March 11 this year), we do not make reverences, instead we make full prostrations. After all, don't we sing, "Before your Cross, we bow down and worship?"

A 4th century Desert Father, St. Serapion the Sindonite, traveled once on pilgrimage to Rome. Here he was told of a celebrated recluse, a woman who lived always in one small room, never going out. Skeptical about her way of life – for he himself was a great wanderer – Serapion called on her and asked: "Why are you sitting here?" To this she replied: "I am not sitting, I am on a journey…"

Every Christian may apply these words to themselves. To be a Christian is to be a traveler, for spiritually we should always be on the move – on a journey through the inward space of the heart, a journey not measured by days, for it is a journey out of time into eternity. What better time than Lent to check our progress?

After the death of Jesus, Nicodemus brought an expensive mixture of spices, about one hundred pounds weight, to anoint the Body of Jesus (John 19:39-40). He was a secret believer until this event.

Editor's Notes

Every year it seems that a different aspect of Lent presents itself. This year, it seems that joy is the overriding note. For example, on the Sunday of the Elevation of the Cross, it is not the suffering of Jesus which is brought to our attention but the joy of His victory over death on the Cross, which is called the Tree of Life. Because of this, we can say: "I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life in the world to come."

My work schedule had become particularly busy, and there was always so much to do. I was beginning to feel exhausted and frazzled, and then, my activities had to come to a screeching halt. I felt disappointed that I had to cancel so many plans that I had made. Then I realized that I had no control over feeling bad or the timing of it, I did have control over how I reacted to it. Instead of being angry, I took the advice Jesus gave his disciples: "Come with me ... to a quiet place and get some rest." I accepted this time as a gift of solitude to enjoy the warmth and peacefulness of my home. I used the quiet to rest and nurture myself physically, spiritually and emotionally. It was one of the most personal "retreats" I've ever experienced. I ended the time feeling renewed. Thank you, God, for Jesus' admonition to slow down and take care of ourselves. Help us to obey it.

Lent by its very nature is a time for personal "retreats." Time to read books, to meditate, to pray. Time to refresh ourselves spiritually and with joy to meet the great day of Resurrection.

Matushka Nina

SOUL SATURDAYS

You have fulfilled your responsibility towards those who have gone on before you and have given your list of their names to the priest so that they can be remembered on certain Saturdays during the year. Three of those Saturdays come during March this year – March 3, 10 and 17. Why does the Orthodox Church stress praying for the dead during this Lenten Season? And why are we reminded of death again on the Sunday of the Veneration of the Cross, which comes on March 11 this year? Let's "connect the dots." This all leads to the Resurrection of Christ (Easter) when we sing "...and upon those in the tombs bestowing life."

We are taught that the prayer of the righteous can help to obtain forgiveness for a sinner even if he is already dead. We read in 2 Maccabees 12:44-45: "For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore, he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin."

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I received a very interesting letter from Susan, who identified herself as a newcomer to the Orthodox faith. She asked whether I realized how difficult it was for someone like her to prepare hearty foods for her family during the Great Lenten period. She wrote that it was not only the restrictions, it was fairly easy to buy vegan things but we had the advantage of having so many filling, cheap things in our ethnic heritage. She gave me a recipe for Mock Chicken Casserole and asked me for the recipe for Cabbage and Noodles that she has been hearing so much about.

MOCK CHICKEN CASSEROLE

a can mushroom soup (dilute with 1/4 cup water or juice from bean sprouts)
1 large can tuna
1/4 lb. or more sliced unsalted cashews
1 can celery soup
1 cup diced celery
1/4 cup chopped onion
1 cup drained bean sprouts
dash pepper
2 - 3 oz. cans chow mein noodles

Combine all ingredients except noodles. Put one can of noodles in the bottom of a baking pan and pour melted oleo or oil over them. Mix, add other ingredients. Top with other can of noodles. Bake at 325° for 40 minutes to one hour.

CABBAGE AND NOODLES

8 oz. pkg. of medium noodles
1 small head cabbage
3 Tbls. shortening
1 chopped onion
salt and pepper
1/4 cup water

Cook noodles in water, drain, and mix with 1 Tbls. shortening. Chop cabbage fine. Add salt and pepper. Let stand for 15 minutes. Squeeze any liquid out of it. Heat 2 Tbls. oil in skillet. Add onion, saute until soft. Add cabbage and fry until golden brown (add water, if too dry). Mix cabbage with noodles and serve. Amounts of cabbage and noodles are arbitrary. Add more or less to your preference.

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PERIODICAL POSTAGE PAID

IN WAYS WE MAY NOT BE AWARE OF, WE SHARE OUR FAITH.

12/16
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DRAWS ATTENTION

John Betjeman visited a country church in Greece. He was very impressed by what Orthodox he saw: symbolic jestures such as lighting a candle, the roles and veneration of ikonc, a sense of "heaven on earth." To express these feelings, he wrote this poem.

...The domed interior swallows up the day.
Here, where to light a candle is to pray,
The candle flame shows up the almond eyes
Of local saints who view with no surprise
Their martyrdoms depicted upon walls
On which the filtered daylight faintly falls.
The flame shows up the cracked paint — sea-green blue
And red and gold, with grained wood showing through —
Of much kissed ikons, dating from, perhaps,
The fourteenth century...
Thus vigorously does the old tree grow,
By persecution pruned, watered with blood,
Its living roots deep in pre-Christian mud.
It needs no bureaucratical protection.
It is its own perpetual resurrection...

Home Bible Reading Schedule

MARCH 2007

1. Proverbs 6:3-20
2. Proverbs 6:20-7:1
3. Mark 1:35-44
4. **Mark 2:1-12**
5. Proverbs 8:1-21
6. Proverbs 8:32-9:11
7. Proverbs 9:12-18
8. Proverbs10:1-22
9. Proverbs 10:31-11:12
10. Mark 2:14-17
11. **Mark 8:34-9:1**
12. Proverbs 11:19-12:6
13. Proverbs 12:8-22
14. Proverbs12:23-13:9
15. Proverbs 13:20-14:6
16. Proverbs14:15-26
17. Mark 7:31-37
18. **Mark 9:17-31**
19. Proverbs 14:27-15:4
20. Proverbs 15:7-19
21. Proverbs 15:20-16:9
22. Proverbs 16:17-17:17
23. Proverbs 17:17-18:5
24. Mark 8:27-31
25. **Mark 10:32-45**
26. Proverbs 19:16-25
27. Proverbs 21:3-21
28. Proverbs 21:23-22:4
29. Proverbs 23:15-24:5
30. Proverbs 31:8-32
31. John 11:1-45

BIBLE STUDY

Most of this Lent, we have been reading from the book of Proverbs. You may have noticed that it has no history, no emphasis of the law, no theory, and no explanation or presentation of theology. It is a book that emphasizes practical application of the law, lessons learned from life; principles to guide everyday life; reverence for God, respect for parents, and regard for the law.

You may also have noticed the use of the word widsom. The word wisdom means more than being smart. Biblical wisdom is moral discernment, mental clarity, perception, and the discipline to do what you know to do.

But you might ask. What is a proverb? A proverb is a summary statement of great universal truth expressed in simple thought. In everyday terms a proverb is like: "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." In Near East though as we read in 25:25 it would be as "As cold water is to a weary soul, so is good news from a far country."

The great lesson to us is given in Prov 1:5-7: "A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, to understand a proverb and an enigma, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

LIGHTER MOMENT

The Sunday School teacher realized that she had to update her Sunday School lessons when she got the following answer from one of her students. She had been teaching her third grade class about the different books in the Bible: the prophets, the Gospels and so on. When she got to the epistles, she asked whether they knew another word for "letters" that starts with "E". The children promptly answered: "E-mail."